

BEAUFORT NATIONAL CEMETERY, WALL
1601 Boundary Street
Beaufort
Beaufort County
South Carolina

HALS SC-1-A
SC-1-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

BEAUFORT NATIONAL CEMETERY, WALL

HALS No. - SC-1-A

Location: 1601 Boundary Street, Beaufort, Beaufort County, South Carolina

Significance: Beaufort was one of the earliest places in the country to be assigned as a National Cemetery site. Congress in the Act of July 17, 1862 authorized the President of the United States (then President Abraham Lincoln) "to purchase cemetery grounds... to be used as a national cemetery for soldiers who shall have died in the services of the country."¹ This act enabled the President to purchase and locate cemeteries for Union Soldiers as needed without much oversight by the Congress. The Beaufort National Cemetery consisted of 28.9 acres, which were part of a 64-acre tract of land known as "Polly's Grove." This tract was acquired at a tax sale on March 11, 1863 and the Attorney General approved title of the property on March 25, 1869.²

The cemetery is not only significant for its association with the Civil War, but it is also important for having the remains of veterans connected to each of the major wars up to the Persian Gulf War. The cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of a multiple property submission of Civil War Era National Cemeteries in 1997 written by Therese T. Sammartino, Staff Assistant, National Cemetery System.

Description: The National Cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina is a 28.9 acre site and is bordered by four streets, including Boundary Street on the south; Lafayette Street on the west; Rodgers Street on the west; and an unpaved road trace, known as National Boulevard on the north. The cemetery is surrounded by a historic brick masonry wall on all four sides that was built in 1876 to replace the original white picket fence.³

The wall is constructed of solid brick. The columns of the wall are approximately 6 feet in height while the actual walls themselves measure approximately 5 feet in height. The wall is close to 2 feet in width at the columns and nearly 1.5 feet at wall sections. There are two existing openings in the wall that serve as entrances. The opening to the south on Boundary Street is the main entrance and has a more decorative gate. The opening to the north along the former National Boulevard is more for maintenance access and also serves as a rear access to the existing cemetery.⁴

¹ "Early Growth of the National Cemetery System," *Quartermaster Review*, Retrieved November 2006, http://www.qmfound.com/early_growth_of_the_national_cemetery_system.htm.

² Therese T. Sammartino, "Beaufort National Cemetery," *National Register Nomination Form*, October 10, 1997. On file at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

³ Daphne Owens Battle, "Archaeological Survey of the 5.74 Hectare (14.18 Acre) Proposed Expansion of the Beaufort National Cemetery, Beaufort County, South Carolina" (Beaufort, SC: Cypress Cultural Consultants, 2002), 17-18.

⁴ Field Notes of Luke Rushing, Assistant Project Manager/Landscape Architecture Staff, The Jaeger Company, May 22 – 23, 2006.

The expansion project will add approximately 15 acres to the existing cemetery on adjacent parcels to the north. The City of Beaufort, which owes the right-of-way for National Boulevard, has agreed to donate this former land as part of the cemetery's expansion. Once the expansion project is complete, the new cemetery will accommodate a number of functions now contained within the historic cemetery, including a new maintenance facility and in later phases the Committal Shelter, where funeral services are held. In order to facilitate ease of circulation between the historic and new cemetery spaces, sections of the wall fronting National Boulevard have been proposed for removal.

Specifically six sections of masonry wall will be removed. Four sections of the wall to be removed are 20 feet long each and provide access between the burial spaces. The existing entrance to the north will also be widened by 10 feet on each side for a total removal of 20 feet of wall. The total amount of wall to be removed will be approximately 100 linear feet. The existing wall is 4,459 linear feet long; therefore, 2.2% of the wall is proposed for removal. The southernmost portion of the wall runs 1,270 feet along Boundary Street, while the easternmost portion of the wall runs 942 feet along Rodgers Street, the westernmost section of the wall runs 915 feet along Lafayette Street and the northern portion of the wall runs 1,332 feet along National Boulevard.

History:

The commanding General of Federal forces bought the approximate 29 acre parcel called Polly's Grove⁵ for \$75 at a tax sale on March 11, 1863.⁶ The Attorney General approved title of the property on March 25, 1869.⁷ The first interments were remains of Union soldiers of the Civil War from burial places in Charleston, Morris Island, Hilton Head, South Carolina and various islands near Beaufort and from several locations in east Florida, as well as from Savannah, Georgia. From 1863-1868, the remains of some 2,800 Union prisoners of war were reinterred at this cemetery from the Confederate Prison Cemetery at Lawton, Georgia.⁸

According to records held by the National Cemetery System a Mr. Dougherty was apparently the first superintendent, holding that position for only a few months. He was then followed by George Griffin, a discharged captain of the First District of Columbia Cavalry, in 1867.⁹ The original layout of the cemetery was much as it is today. It was described by the Secretary of War in 1868 (Edwin Stanton) as a beautifully set cemetery in the shape of a half-circle with roads diverging from the front gate. A large, ten-foot high earth mound was also constructed near the front gate to support a flagstaff. At the time of the Secretary of War's visit the cemetery was surrounded by a white picket fence, which was later replaced in 1876 by the current brick masonry wall.¹⁰ Four smaller mounds

⁵ Also referred to as "Jolly's Grove" in the archaeological survey conducted in 2002 Cypress Cultural Consultants.

⁶ Sammartino, "Beaufort National Cemetery."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Battle, "An Archaeological Survey...", 17-18.

were placed at equal distances around the flagpole mound with a large iron gun planted vertically in the center of each. These iron guns have since been removed.¹¹

Included with this original layout of the cemetery was a lodge building for the superintendent of the cemetery. The first lodge was a wooden cottage that was built outside the enclosed cemetery. This small three-room cottage was moved within the enclosure of the cemetery in 1877. Later in 1881 a new lodge was built near the original one of a design instituted by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs. At this time the previous wooden lodge was utilized as a tool house. The Meigs' lodge was replaced in 1934 by a two-story brick and frame structure typical to the National Cemetery System at this time. It is assumed that at this time the first three-room cottage was no longer extant. The third lodge is still in use today as the Cemetery Office.¹²

Also on the site today west of the entrance gate is a brick and stucco maintenance building with a metal roof that was constructed in 1894. An addition was made to this building in 1949 to provide work space and tool storage, as well as an oil and a paint room. A late nineteenth century brick and iron octagonal rostrum¹³ was located in the northwestern portion of the cemetery. This rostrum is no longer extant as in 1964 the roof and columns were removed and then in 1966 the balance of the remains were removed.¹⁴

Over the years three commemorative monuments have been added to the cemetery. These are the: 1) Union Soldier's Monument; 2) Potter Monument; and 3) Massachusetts Monument. The Union Soldier's Monument is at the end of the central road of the cemetery and is a granite obelisk approximately twenty (20) feet in height. This monument was to honor those who died for the Union cause during the Civil War. The inscription reads as follows (note: Mrs. L.T.P. is Mrs. Lorenzo Tucker Potter):

IMMORTALITY
TO HUNDREDS OF
THE DEFENDERS OF
AMERICAN LIBERTY
AGAINST THE GREAT
REBELLION
ERECTED BY THE EFFORTS OF MRS. L.T.P.¹⁵

The Potter Monument is located in Section 64 and is an unfinished marble tablet on a brick base that was also erected by Mrs. Lorenzo Tucker Potter. Inscribed on this monument are 175 names of soldiers from most of the states of the Union at the time of the Civil War, with the majority from Massachusetts. Mrs. Potter and

¹¹ Sammartino, "Beaufort National Cemetery."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Defined by the The Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2006 as: "any platform, stage, or the like, for public speaking." Typically the use of rostrums in cemeteries was for use with public services and memorial speeches.

¹⁴ Sammartino, "Beaufort National Cemetery."

¹⁵ Ibid.

her husband served the suffering at a local hospital and all 175 soldiers had been served by the Potters while in the hospital.¹⁶

The final monument was dedicated on May 29, 1989 by Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. This monument consists of two bronze plaques affixed to stone bases on behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.¹⁷ This monument followed the re-interment of nineteen African-American Union soldiers who had died during their winter encampment in 1863 and had been buried on the brigade cemetery on Folly Island, SC. These remains were excavated in May 1987 during development of the island and then transferred to the Beaufort National Cemetery.¹⁸

The Beaufort National Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 1997 as part of a Multiple Property Nomination regarding the National Cemeteries by Therese T. Sammartino, an employee of the National Cemetery System. This was soon followed by the cemetery receiving a Blue Star Memorial marker from the National Council of State Garden Clubs. This was the first cemetery in South Carolina to receive such recognition.¹⁹

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¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Beaufort National Cemetery," Retrieved November 2006, <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/nchp/beaufort.asp>.

¹⁹ *The Beaufort Gazette* (Beaufort, South Carolina), October 18, 1998.

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Site Documentation

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